

The mythical "conquest of Kiev" by Gedimin

Nicholas Zharkikh

Gedimin did not had any battle on Irpen river with anyone else – neither with the Russian princes, nor with the Tatars. Neither in 1323 nor in any other year.

If you, the reader, know this and agree with this statement – you does not need to read my article, because you already have a correct idea of the subject.

The meaning of reading the article is only when you want to get an idea of how this fantasy originated and developed in our "historiography". Also, if you believe in the reality of the battle – you can look at the article (starting from the conclusions), although I doubt very much that I will be able to convince someone of the Ipren-battle-lovers.

Since mythical, fictitious events can not have real sources, the article will be devoted exclusively to the historiography of the question. We will read the thoughts of "historians", beginning with the first news in the 1530s and ending with the year 2017, and then we'll see if something instructive can be extracted from this.

The extracts use colors and symbols:

- with the number (1) and **green background** – marked works, whose authors completely deny the reality of the "battle", giving for this arguments;
- with the number (2) and **green background** – marked works, whose authors completely deny the reality of the "battle", without giving arguments (simple statement);
- with the number (3) and **yellow background** – marked works, whose authors expressed the reasoned doubts in the reality of the "battle", but did not exclude it categorically;
- with the number (4) and **yellow background** – marked works, the authors of which simply stated the doubtfulness of the "battle", but did not exclude it categorically;
- with the number (5) and **red background** – marked works, which gave full faith to fantasies about the "battle" and made attempts to "argue" these fantasies;
- with the number (6) and **red background** – marked works, which gave full faith to fantasies about the "battle" without argumentation (simple statement)
- with the number (7) and **purple background** – I highlighted the works in which I hoped to find statements about the "battle", but they are not there (which means that the author's position is not clear).

16th century

19th century

Analysis of historiography

17th century

20th century

Why the story is mythical

18th century

21st century

Conclusions

Kyiv, May 1 – June 2, 2018

16th century

(6) 1530-ies. "Fabulous emergence of Lithuania"

(6) 1560-ies. "Bykhovets Chronicle"

(6) 1582 M. Strykovsky

17th century

(6) 1611 A. Guagnini – M. Paszkowski

(6) 1620-ies. The Gustyn chronicle

(6) 1674 Synopsis

(6) 1690 Collection of Ilya Koshchakovsky

18th century

(6) 1719 G. Grabyanka

(7) 1750 V. N. Tatishchev

(5) 1774 M. M. Scherbatov

(6) 1784 A. Naruszewich

(6) 1785 Description of the Kiev viceroy

(5) 1799 M. F. Berlinsky

19th century

(3) 1816 N. M. Karamzin

(6) 1822 D. N. Bantysh-Kamensky

(6) Ca. 1828 "History of the Rus"

(3) 1830 D. N. Bantysh-Kamensky

(7) 1833 N. A. Polevoy

(6) 1837 M. A. Maksimovich

(3) 1838 Th. Narbutt

(6) 1838 J. Lelevel

(6) 1842 N. A. Markevich

(3) 1853 K. Stadnicki

(6) 1854 S. M. Soloviev

(1) 1855 D. I. Zubritsky

(6) 1860 N. I. Kostomarov

(5) 1862 I. I. Sharanevich

(6) 1868 N. V. Zakrevsky

(1) 1878 V. B. Antonovich

(3) 1882 N. P. Dashkevich

(4) 1883 J. Rzhazhabek

(6) 1884 A. A. Kunik

(7) 1884 M. I. Kojalovich

(4) 1886 M. F. Vladimirsky-Budanov

(7) 1887 A. M. Andriashev

(4) 1888 N. I. Petrov and I. I. Malyshevsky

(2) 1889 P. D. Bryantsev

(1) 1891 M. S. Hrushevsky

(2) 1892 R. V. Zotov

(4) 1892 M. K. Ljubavsky

(2) 1894 F. I. Leontovich

(2) 1896 D. I. Ilovaisky

20th century

(2) 1906 A. Ja. Efimenko

(4) 1908 N. N. Arkas

(2) 1908 A. E. Presnyakov

(2) 1912 J. Jakubowski

(6) 1915 M. K. Ljubavsky

(2) 1917 S. F. Platonov

(1) 1918 F. P. Sushitsky

(7) 1930 L. Kolankowski

(7) 1932 D. I. Doroshenko

(7) 1936 S. Kuczyński

(7) 1953 "Essays on the history of the USSR"

(5) 1954 P. Gritsak

(7) 1959 V. T. Pashuto

(7) 1963 The Soviet Historical Encyclopedia

(5) 1963 "History of Kiev"

(5) 1966 A. I. Rogov

(3) 1970 M. B. Zhdan

(7) 1972 N. D. Polonskaya-Vasilenko

(7) 1982 "History of Kiev"

(5) 1987 F. M. Shabuldo

(7) 1988 O. Subtelny

(3) 1993 V. L. Nosevich

(1) 1994 E. V. Rusina

(7) 1994 Encyclopedia of the history of Belarus

(3) 1996 G. Ju. Ivakin

(4) 1997 N. M. Yakovenko

(5) 2000 L. V. Voitovich

21st century

(6) 2004 Encyclopedia of the history of Ukraine

(2) 2007 Encyclopedia
Grand Duchy of Lithuania

(6) 2006 V. B. Belinsky

(6) 2008 «Ukraine: the Lithuanian era 1320 – 1569»

(6) 2009 R. Ju. Pochekaev

(4) 2009 Z. Norkus

(2) 2013 A. K. Kravtsevich

(5) 2015 B. V. Cherkas

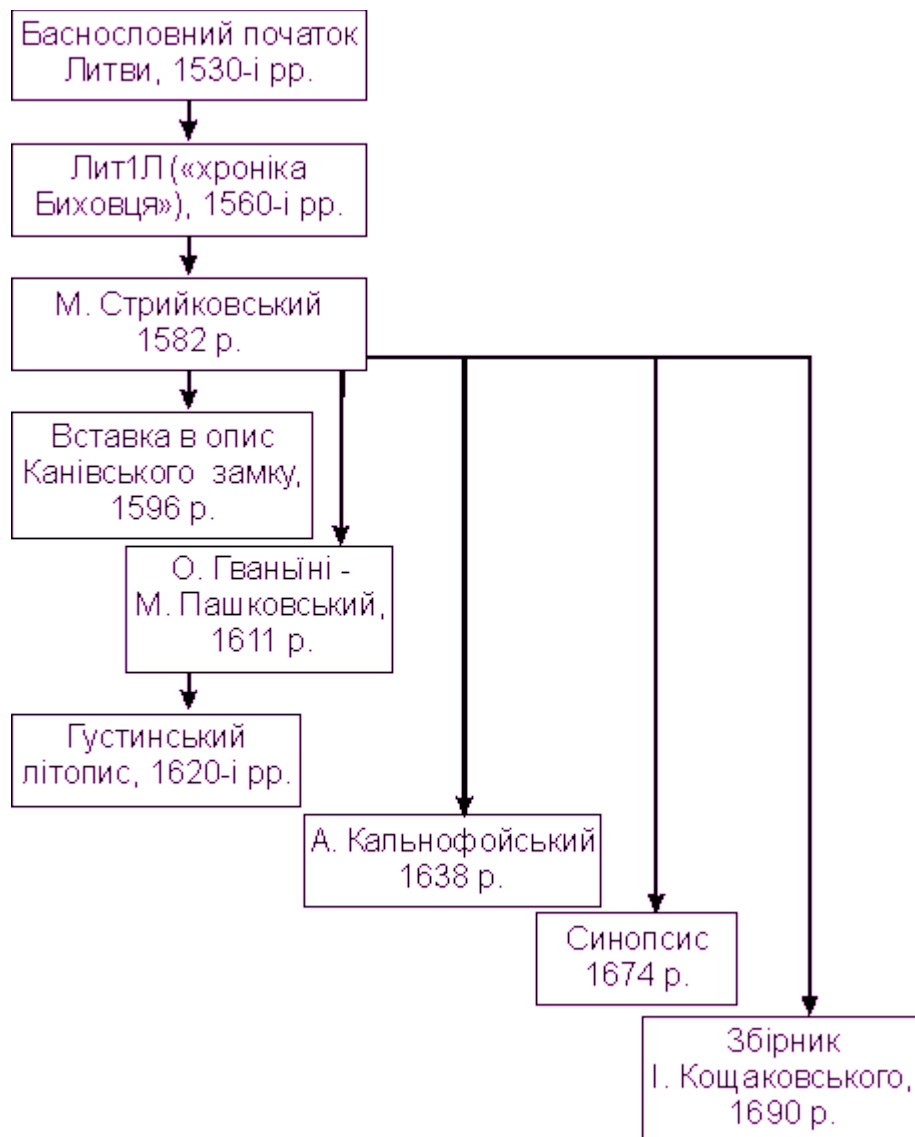
(5) 2015 V. P. Sajuk

(7) 2016 R. Hautala

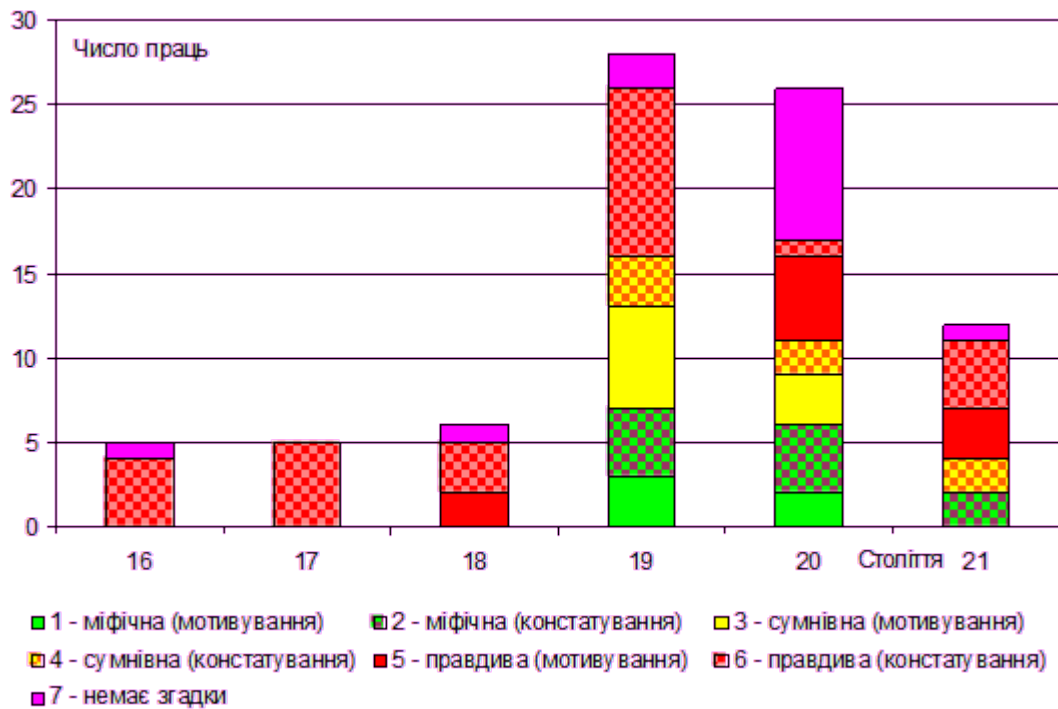
(4) 2017 Grandfather Svirid

(5) 2017 V. P. Sajuk

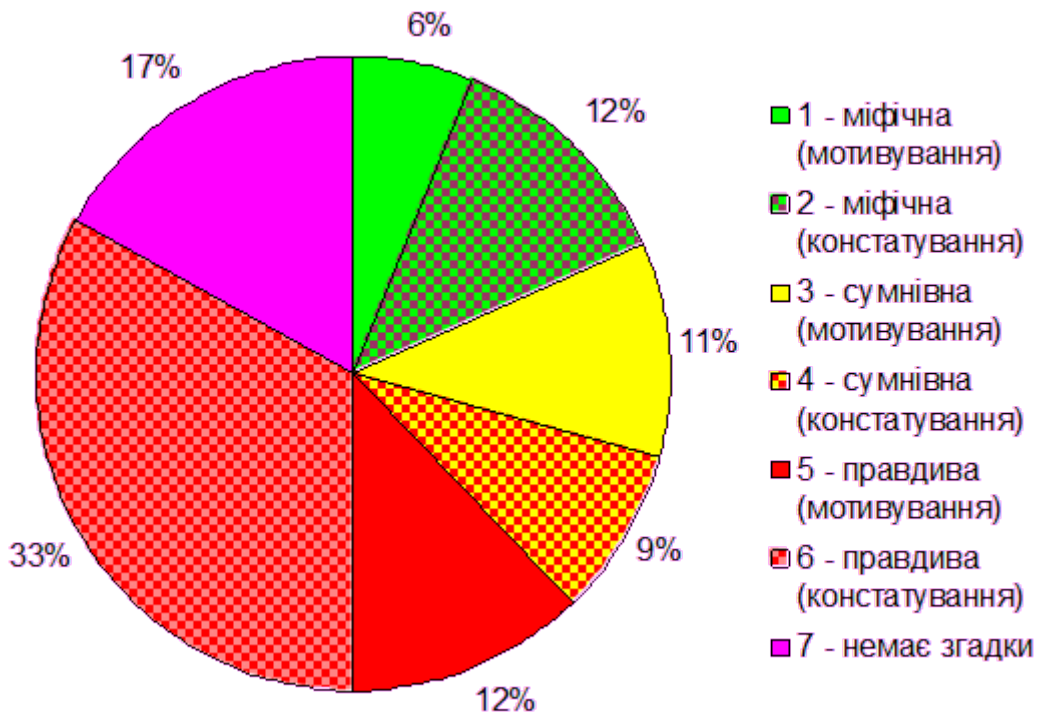
Analysis of historiography



Stemma of early texts on «Gedimin's campaign to Kiev»



Dynamics of historiographic trends about «Gedimin's campaign to Kiev»



Shares of historiographic trends about «Gedimin's campaign to Kiev»

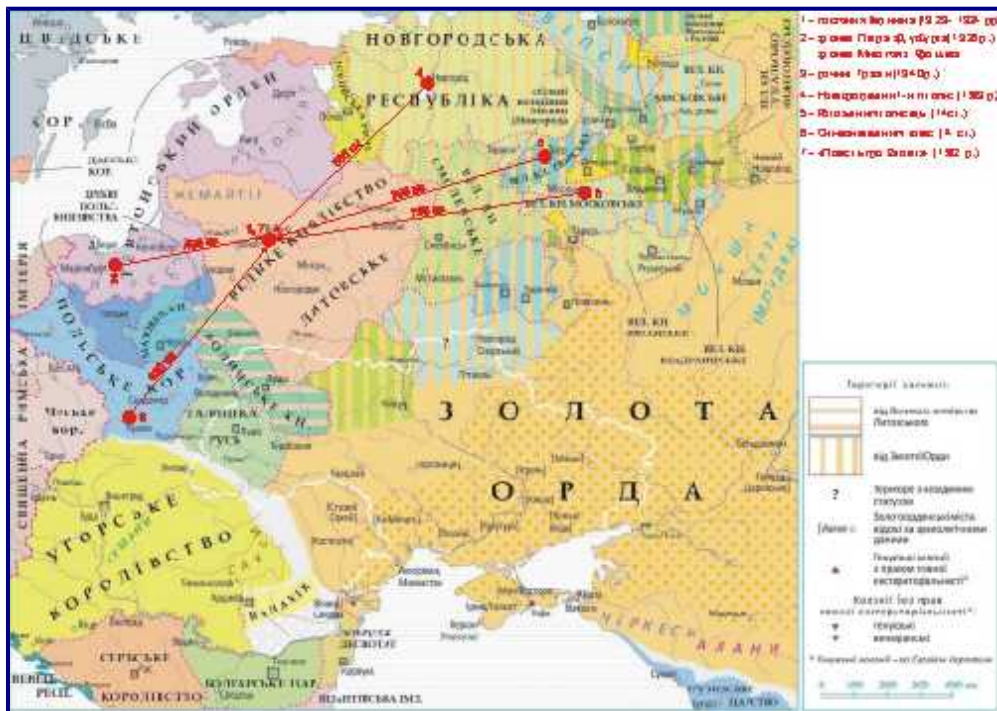
Truth in historical science is established by analyzing sources, and in this work retrograde historiography can not harm anything (and the progressive historian can not do anything to help).

Why the story is mythical

Theoretical basis

One starting point

Modern sources



Schematic map of written sources for Gedimin's rule

System emptiness

Illusory "details"

Trends in the work

Unreasonable fantasy

Conclusions

1. The period of Gedimin's rule in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is relatively well illuminated in the sources written at that time in Poland, the Teutonic Order, northeast Russia, and also in Lithuania itself. All of them unanimously remain silent about "the campaign of Gedimin to Volyn and Kiev."

2. A detailed narrative about this campaign was written from scratch in the 1530s in Vilnius – as part of the article "The fabulous emergence of Lithuania", set at the beginning of the "Lithuanian" chronicle. This article has undeniable literary merits and fills the void in the question – how Lithuania from a small principality on the Neman turned into a great power.

3. Despite this, the article "The fabulous emergence of Lithuania" is extremely tendentious (in the spirit of Lithuanian patriotism) and completely incompetent. None of the specific episodes of the history of Lithuania presented in it are supported by other sources. This also applies to such a part of the article as the story of the "march to Volyn and Kiev".

4. The author of the article, written two centuries after the reign of Gedimin, knew absolutely nothing about him, except for the name taken from the former "Vytautas" chronicle. Any oral traditions of Gedimin were not recorded in any part of the large territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Writing in Lithuania at the time of Gedimin barely began to spread (Gedimin's messages), and one should not allow the creation of any written stories in such a society. The author of *The Tale of Vitovt* at the end of the 14th century had not knew neither oral nor the recorded stories about Gedimin. These stories were not known in later time too.

5. All the later texts on the "march to Volyn and Kiev" come from this single source.

6. The story of the "march to Volyn and Kiev" was greatly reworked by M. Strykowski and printed in 1582 in his chronicle. There, the stories are greatly expanded at the expense of Strykowski's own fabrications, and the "dates" invented by him are added.

7. From the end of the 16th to the middle of the 19th century in historical literature, shortened versions of M. Strykowski's story were distributed, with attempts at new "dating" of this "event". Since the end of the 18th century we can see weak doubts about the reliability of this story.

8. A decisive contribution to the discrediting of the story of the "march to Volyn and Kiev" as a late fantasy belongs to the Ukrainian scientists D. Zubritsky (1855), V. Antonovich (1878), M. Hrushevsky (1891), P. Klepatsky (1912), F. Sushitsky (1918), E. Rusina (1994). In these works, irrefutable proofs of the late and fantasy origin of this story are formulated and tested, which has nothing to do with the realities of the 14th century. These conclusions were received by scientists from Poland, Belarus and Russia.

9. The opinion that this narrative is completely truthful or although contains the seeds of truth, in our time can not be acceptable.

10. Some explanation (but not an excuse) for such an erroneous position may be that the human mind does not tolerate emptiness and requires an answer – at least illusory – to the question that the author of the 16th century was already concerned with: how Lithuania acquired vast territories in Eastern Europe? A certain role in maintaining the authority of this myth is played by the love of historians to rewrite previous texts instead of independent analysis and a methodological error (the consideration and assessment of the political situation is placed ahead of the analysis of sources, and the reliability of texts is determined on the basis of a vision of the political situation).

11. So, the story of the "march to Volyn and Kiev" can serve as a source for social and political thought of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th century and for the history of literature. In fact there was no such march.